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Request for the inclusion of an additional item in the agenda of the fifty-ninth session

Observer status for the Economic Community of West African States in the General Assembly

Letter dated 15 September 2004 from the Representatives of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

In accordance with rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and pursuant to a decision of the 15-member Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) of 4 July 2004, we have the honour to request the inclusion of an additional item in the agenda of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, entitled "Observer status for the Economic Community of West African States in the General Assembly".

In accordance with rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, an explanatory memorandum on the matter has been attached (see annex I), as well as a draft resolution (see annex II).

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Ambassador
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(*Signed*) Michel **Kafando**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Burkina Faso

(*Signed*) Herminio **Moniz**
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Ambassador
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(*Signed*) Crispin **Grey-Johnson**
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(*Signed*) Alpha Ibrahima **Sow**
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(*Signed*) Alfredo Lopes **Cabral**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Guinea-Bissau

(*Signed*) Lami **Kawah**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Liberia

(*Signed*) Cheick Sidi **Diarra**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Mali

(*Signed*) Ousmane **Moutari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the Niger

(*Signed*) Aminu Bashir **Wali**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

(*Signed*) Paul **Badji**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Senegal

(*Signed*) Joe Robert **Pemagbi**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone

(*Signed*) Kodjo **Menan**
Chargé d'affaires a.i. of Togo

(*Signed*) Nana **Effah-Apenteng**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Ghana
Chairman of ECOWAS

Annex I

Explanatory memorandum submitted under rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly

Establishment

The treaty of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), signed on 28 May 1975, consolidated the process leading to the establishment of ECOWAS. Pursuant to Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations, the treaty was registered with the Secretariat of the United Nations.

Membership

ECOWAS is made up of the following 15 member States of West Africa: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo.

Aims and purpose

The creation of ECOWAS arose from the determination to accelerate the economic and social development of the States of West Africa through effective cooperation. To that end, ECOWAS has as its principal aim the integration of the national economies into an economic and monetary union. This involves the promotion of cooperation and development in all fields of economic activity, particularly agriculture, natural resources, commerce, monetary and financial questions, and social and cultural matters for the purpose of raising the standard of living of its peoples, increasing and maintaining economic stability, fostering closer relationship among its members and contributing to the progress and development of the African continent.

Institutions of ECOWAS

The work and activities of ECOWAS are carried out through the following structures: Authority of Heads of State and Government, Council of Ministers, Executive Secretariat, ECOWAS Parliament, ECOWAS Court of Justice, ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development, West African Health Organization, West African Monetary Agency, and technical and specialized commissions (covering all sectors and meeting at both the senior official and ministerial levels).

Activities, achievements and cooperation with the United Nations

The creation of an economic and monetary union has involved ECOWAS countries in various regional programmes aimed at market, monetary, physical, production and political integration. The market integration programme led to the establishment of West Africa as a free-trade area in January 2000, accompanied by a regional transit arrangement for goods; a common external tariff is to be introduced in January 2005 as the next step towards a customs union. Free movement of persons within the region has been achieved and member States have adopted common ECOWAS passports and travel certificates. A common currency is being created on a gradual basis through the establishment of a second monetary zone by July 2005, which is to be merged later with the existing CFA franc zone. A regional payments arrangement exists and an ECOWAS travellers cheque has been introduced.

ECOWAS physical integration programmes have led to the development of a network of trans-West African highways and a regional system of telecommunication links. In the field of energy, a West African power pool is being created which involves the coordinated generation, transmission, distribution and marketing of power from conventional, new and renewable sources of energy. In the real sector, ECOWAS is promoting public/private partnerships to create a conducive business environment. This involves assistance to regional professional bodies of the organized private sector in organizing such events as regional trade fairs, industrial forums and buyer/seller meetings for promoting joint ventures and trans-border investments.

ECOWAS has played a pioneering role in the developing world with the establishment of a mechanism for regional peace and security. The ECOWAS mediation and peacekeeping operations entity (ECOMOG) helped to resolve the civil conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and Côte d'Ivoire. A regional early-warning system and a high-level mediation organ form part of the ECOWAS conflict-prevention mechanism in operation in West Africa.

Over the years, ECOWAS has developed very close working relations with the United Nations system. The active involvement of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) led to the creation of ECOWAS, and since then ECA has supported key programmes, including the rationalization of West African intergovernmental organizations. ECOWAS involves the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the International Trade Centre and the World Trade Organization in its trade development programmes. United Nations Industrial Development Organization assisted in the formulation of an ECOWAS regional industrial master plan and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations is involved in the adoption of a common agricultural policy and a regional food security programme for West Africa. The International Telecommunication Union is an active partner in the modernization of the regional telecommunications system; similarly, the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Meteorological Organization are involved in the ECOWAS environment programmes. The World Health Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund participate in the social and cultural cooperation programmes (health, education, culture, gender and child protection). The United Nations Development Programme (particularly its Regional Bureau for Africa) and the Security Council have been involved in the ECOWAS economic integration and regional security initiatives, respectively.

Conclusion

It is the hope of ECOWAS that its desire to strengthen cooperation with the United Nations is shared by all members of the General Assembly and that a decision will be taken at the fifty-ninth session inviting ECOWAS to participate in the session and work of the General Assembly in the capacity of observer.

Annex II

Draft resolution

Observer status for the Economic Community of West African States in the General Assembly

The General Assembly,

Desirous of promoting cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Community of West African States,

1. *Decides* to invite the Economic Community of West African States to participate in the sessions and work of the General Assembly in the capacity of observer;

2. *Requests* the Secretary-General to take the necessary measures to implement the present resolution.